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# *Moral Philosophy of Richard Price* AND ITS INFLUENCE.

Being a Study in Ethics both Critical and Appreciative  
of his chief work:

## A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals.

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A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of Requirements for  
The Doctorate of Philosophy  
at the  
New York University,  
June, 1909.

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By Enoch Cook Lavers, A.M., Pd.D.,  
Easton, Pa.

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АМЯСЧУАО

Sanctae memoriae et meae matri et patris mei, omnibus meis grammaticis et rhetoribus, qui mihi principes et ad suscipiendam et ingrediendam rationem humanitatis fuerent, atque Doctori Carolo Gray Shaw et Doctori Roberto McDougall et Doctori Thomaso M. Balliett et Doctori Jacobo E. Lough quorum praelectiones philisophicas audiri maxima cum gratia haec dissertatio inscribitur.

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# The Moral Philosophy of Richard Price and Its Influence.

By ENOCH COOK LAVERS, A. M., P.D.D.

As compared with the various practical sciences, ethics is normative, that is, it seeks the ideal ends of life, though it does not confine itself to ends alone. Logic holds a similar position in speculative philosophy. With C. G. Shaw, "Life must be regarded from the standpoint of the ethical; thought must be logical; but logic and ethics similarly fail to contribute to human living."

To attain this comprehensive statement, ethics has struggled up through as varied and as conflicting a history as any of the branches of human speculation. It presented itself early and has persisted since the days of Pythagoras. To recount earlier or later theories does not pertain to our problem. A critical estimate of Price's chief work is attempted from a sympathetic standpoint, regarding its origin, outgrowth from the times, and place in ethical development.

The philosophic study of ethics is in general partly destructive in that it criticises, corrects, supplements and classifies the distinctions of common sense. Some familiar distinctions, some effete prohibitions and injunctions, some crude notions of the nature of moral authority and moral sanctions, together with idiosyncrasies of specific systems are outgrown and abandoned. Moral law, like statute law, grows by constant accretion and reconstruction. Social forms and institutions are modified accordingly. Science is critical and often gives apparently negative results.

Yet, ethics has a positive and reconstructive side. It seeks not to explain away but to establish genuine ideals of duty and right. Ethics separates the essential from the unessential, the permanent from the transient, the spirit from the form of moral and social institutions. The truths of ethics are vitally related to those of aesthetics and religion, and of science or philosophy in general so that it is a necessary constituent of man's knowledge, experience and progress in life.

Especially is moral philosophy inviting to the student and thinker when a system is associated with a vigorous and charming personality, which must be conceded in the case of Dr. Richard Price. The work we are to consider was quite justly regarded by the advocates of rational intuitionism as a most valuable performance. Even by some of his opponents, it was admitted to be the most able statement of the defence of intuitive principles in the English language up to his day.

## Definition and Origin of Different Systems.

Ethics may be briefly defined as the doctrine of human conduct and character as related to a rational ideal. This science assumes as its basis, the fact that men are prone to criticise themselves and others and cannot help admiring in various degrees some expressions of affection and good will as well as condemning the opposites. This tendency displays itself in all activities of life and among all peoples. The origin of it all is in a consciousness of better or worse in human beings and affairs. People aspire with more or less constancy and distinctness to realize the good and avoid the evil. While men concede that there is a chasm between life as it is and as it ought to be, the great masses seek no definite standard, investigate no foundation for their feeling, but they go on according to spontaneous impulses, while admiring some actions and condemning others they see or perform. A few thoughtful men in each age have sought to solve the problems of life with varying results.

Different views about ethical facts give rise to divergent systems. The aim of ethical science is to remove whatever is impulsive, accidental and unreflective in the statement of these facts, to trace them to their ultimate ground in our nature and the universe and to set forth universally *the ideal of individual and*

*social perfection.* The problems of ethics are not only personal but also social and even racial. To introspection must be added observation and comparison together with the historical record. Were a purely speculative doctrine of ethics possible, it might involve the investigator in conclusions wholly false respecting actual conditions. Environment determines opportunities and must affect duties as well as the possible activity of motives.

Nature and God are man's eternal companions. The most opposite schools of opinion arise as to whether the external or the internal is first considered—e. g. realism or idealism. The former leads to determination, the latter to voluntarism with all the discussions of freedom. The former follows unpsychologic, the latter psychologic method.

The intellectual energy of the period of English thought preceding Price had a general tendency to psychologic rather than ethical method, especially in Hartley, Adam Smith and Hume. The last sometimes allowed the absorption of his ethics into psychology, producing confusion. Surprise must not be felt if it is found that Price is also unclear psychologically at times, though in general, Price, Reid and Stewart reacted against the prevailing tendency. They sought to fall back upon the moral principles commonly accepted, affirming their objective validity and endeavoring to exhibit them as a coherent and complete set of ultimate ethical truths.

There are two markedly opposite aspects of existence that which appears and that which is, phenomena and reality. The notion of something permanent as the core of all that is transient, cannot be separated from the activities of the intellect for its attribute must inhere in substance. Development of ethics here gives metaphysical theories similar to Plato, Descartes or Malebranche on the one side, or physical like Comte on the other.

As the standard herein, it is held (\*) that some form of idealism in ethics is the only consistent and tenable theory. Human ethical ideals must have their ground, their sanction, and their goal, in the nature of ultimate reality. The facts, opinions, and tendencies with

which the philosophy of conduct is concerned, have reference to human ideals, as covering not only the ethical, but harmonizing with the aesthetical and religious nature of man. Right is defined for every individual and for every age by the fidelity with which the individual and the age actualizes in conduct its perpetually growing ideal. The spirit of devotion to the ideal of personal being in social relations constitutes the very essence of ethical rightness. Often the ideal appears when the moral problem appears and is certainly a *personal* ideal, involving the conception of the life of moral and social self-hood, in its whole range of constitutional activities progressively attaining the perfection of its being. The most defensible and comprehensive idealistic theory of man's ethical life and development is far enough from being complete in itself. Human notions which attach a kind of absolute and unchanging value to actions, imply the expansion of conception of self-hood into an absolute self wherein dwells the perfect ideal, and who is the object of religious faith, contemplation and service. Human morality needs the aid of religion for its better support and more effective triumph over all the weaknesses and temptations which assault and try the very foundations upon which it reposes its rules for the practical life. Light shines upon the ultimate problems of ethics by identifying the ground of morality with the world-ground, i. e., considering God the source of moral law, its sanctions, and its development; and also by justifying the hope that the ultimate moral ideal will be realized in the full establishment of the Divine Kingdom—wherein philosophy of ethics and philosophy of religion give mutual support.

#### Classification of Ethical Theories.

The ethical theories of the great systematic thinkers, whatever their general aim, fit but imperfectly into any logical classification, yet for the purpose of placing our author in his proper relations, such a plan is useful. Herein two grounds of classification are used: (1) Theories which depend chiefly upon a special view of the ideal end, or *summum bonum*. (2) Theories which start from the mode in which morality is apprehended or realized.

\*Ladd 510, et 511 seq. condensed.

As to ideal or highest good, Hedonism and Perfection may be named. According to Hedonism, pleasure is the ultimate standard (or constituent) of moral value, the tendency to increase pleasure or diminish pain. With variations, this is common to the ancients—Aristippus of Cyrene, Epicurus—and to the moderns (1) Egoists, (2) Altruists, and (3) Utilitarians. The Egoists claim that the standard for conduct is its tendency towards the preservation, interest or pleasure of the individual agent. The leading Egoists are Hobbes, Mandeville and Schopenhauer. The latter says that the mainspring of human action is egoism, supplemented by the hatred or the malice which arises through egoistic conflicts. The other branch of modern Hedonism is called universalistic because the moral end is the greatest pleasure of mankind generally. This includes (1) the altruists who profess interest in others for their good and the moral end of conduct, and (2) the utilitarians who regard adaptation to an end as the criterion of moral worth, the end being interpreted as happiness. To this denomination has of late been added the greatest happiness or greatest felicity principle. The altruists are Comte, (who invented the term) Hutcheson, Cumberland, Shaftesbury.

The utilitarians are J. S. Mill, (who invented the term utilitarianism) Locke, Hartley, Hume, Paley, Bentham, James Mill, Bain, Sidgwick, Hodgson and Fowler.

The doctrines of Perfection and Self-Realization in so far as distinct from the rationalistic and intuitionist ethics, may be said to date from Aristotle, who maintained that the chief good consisted in an activity in accordance with the highest virtue or excellence. The theories grouped here vary greatly. The nature of the perfection which is to be attained, or the self which is to be realized, can only be expounded after a philosophical inquiry, and the ethical doctrines of Spinoza, Leibnitz, Fichte, Hegel, may all be included here. The form in which the notion of self realization appears in contemporary ethics is largely due to T. H. Green, who lays special stress both upon the spiritual or rational and on the social nature of the self. Dewey, Mackenzie and Muirhead have also been placed here.

The second great group, made as to the mode in which morality is apprehended or realized, includes the intuitionists and the evolutionists. According to the intuitionist or autonomistic view of ethics, the end of conduct consists in the correspondence of voluntary activity with certain intuitively recognized moral rules. This view has its historical antecedent in the Stoic doctrine of laws of nature, belonging to the reason of the universe and apprehended by the substantial reason of man. The same doctrine formulated in theological terms led to the dominant systems of mediaeval ethics in the related doctrines of Synchronesis and Conscience. In the beginning of English philosophy these moral first principles were regarded as principles of the *sensus communis* by Herbert of Cherbury; and he may accordingly be held to be the founder of the English school of intuitionist or common-sense morality. These intuitionists include (1) the Aesthetic, (2) the Rational, and (3) the Speculative.

In the 18th century, this immediate apprehension of moral value was interpreted as aesthetic by Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and later Adam Smith in his doctrine of sympathy.

The rational, or "dogmatic" interpretation of the moral faculty was worked out by Cudworth, Samuel Clarke, Butler, Price and Reid, with the Scottish school; and also the French school, including Cousin, Jouffroy and Janet.

Speculative or philosophic intuitionism reaches a complete synthesis of moral law, founded upon a criticism of the reason in Kant. His followers tend rather to the perfectionist than the traditional intuitionist ideal but Whewell, Calderwood, McCosh and Martineau are classed here. The last is the most brilliant and original outcome of recent intuitionist doctrine.

The evolutionists seek to develop the moral from that which is unmoral, and a naturalistic theory of volition. At first the theory of evolution was associated with the Hedonistic theory. Modifications were soon made by Spencer, while Stephen and others have attempted a more specific evolutionist ethics. By these writers, some such conception as social vitality has often been taken as the ethical ideal; but the most valuable part of their work has been in tracing

the genesis and progress of morality both historically and in the individual, rather than in contributions towards the solution of the question of the ultimate conditions of moral value. The principal authors are Darwin, Simcox, Spencer, L. Stephen, Rolph, Hoffding, S. Alexander, Wundt, Simmel, Baldwin, Lorley, and Clifford.

#### A Sympathetic Statement of Intuitionism.

Intuition is that power of the mind which gives ideas and truths not furnished by the senses nor elaborated by the understanding as judgment or reasoning. Its products are primary ideas such as space, time, cause, identity, the true, the beautiful and the good, and primary truths such as the axioms of mathematics. These ideas are not notions of sensible objects but are awakened in the mind by means of sensible objects which are the *occasion* but not the cause of these ideas. Their origin must be attributed to a special power of the mind by virtue of which under appropriate circumstances it conceives these truths and ideas when the power is called origenerative or *intuitive*. Its specific character is distinct from any other power, being neither presentative nor representative but a power of simple and immediate conception, not reflective, yet its objects are conceived as realistic. Under different names it is the doctrine substantially of Reid, Stewart, Brown, Cudworth, Clarke, Butler, Price, among British metaphysicians; Kant and his disciples in Germany; Cousin, Jouffrey, Janet and others in France. It is denied by Hobbes, Locke, Condillac, Gassendi, and others who trace all our ideas to sense as their ultimate source.

#### Universally Prevalent.

When attention is directed to the voluntary action of any intelligent rational being, man finds himself not unfrequently passing upon its character as *right* or *wrong*. Different individuals may vary as to correctness, clearness or strength of impression, but in all minds the idea of right and wrong finds a place, and the understanding applies it to particular instances of conduct.

The origin of these ideas of right and wrong has been attributed to education and fashion, legal restriction, a special sense, an exercise of judgment,

(evolution), or to natural intuitions of the mind. Education or imitation and legal enactment presuppose the existence of moral ideas and distinction. \*—1

The theory of a special moral sense seems to make morality a mere sentiment, only a matter of feeling. Moral distinctions, according to this view, are only merely subjective affections of our minds, and not independent realities. Hume carries this general view out to its legitimate results, making morality a mere relation between our nature and certain objects. Thus virtue and vice like color and taste, lie merely in our sensations. The Sophists long previously advanced these skeptical views, and taught that man is the measure of all things, that things are only what they seem to us. Hutcheson used the term sense in an ambiguous manner, sometimes to denote a perceptive power, which might be considered correct, but more generally to denote some adaptation of the sensibilities to receive impressions from without. There is no evidence of such a moral sense; indeed, facts contradict such a belief. There is no uniformity of moral impressions or sensation as ought to be manifest on such a supposition. Man's eyes and ears are much alike in their activity, the world over; but it is otherwise with the operation of this so-called moral sense. While all men have, probably, some idea of right and wrong, there is the greatest possible variety in its application to particular instances of conduct.

#### Judgment.

The judgment does not originate ideas for it compares, distributes, estimates, decides to what class or category a thing belongs but creates nothing. Given idea, as of right and wrong, the judgment decides as to the moral character of particular actions.

#### Intuitive.

Ideas of right and wrong are intuitive; i. e., suggestions or perceptions of *reason*, a variety of the understanding. It is the office of reason to discern right and wrong, as well as the true and the false, or the beautiful and the ugly. The idea of the right is a cognition in relation to the actions of rational beings. In contemplation of certain personal ac-

\*—1 P. 305.

He says that the *practical* errors of men have "plainly arisen from their speculative errors; from their mistaking facts, or not seeing the whole of a case. There are errors of judgment, imagination and reasoning. Men would not claim that other men have no speculative reasoning powers because they arrive at false opinions. He even admits that education, custom and prejudice all darken the action of the royal reason, and moral judgments differ with age and circumstances, which certainly weakens the intuitional theory.

In the eighth chapter, Price makes the distinction between *Abstract* or *Absolute Virtue* and *Practical* or *Relative Virtue*. He says, "Abstract Virtue is, most properly, a quality of the external action or event. It denotes what an action is, considered independently of the *sense* of the agent; or what, in *itself* and *absolutely*, it is right *such* an agent, in such circumstances, should do; and what, if he judged truly, he would judge he ought to do. Practical Virtue, on the contrary, has a necessary relation to, and a dependence upon, the opinion of the agent concerning his actions. It signifies what, it is true he ought to do, *upon supposition* of his having such and such sentiments. Obligations have a real existence independent of men's judgments, yet in accordance with our author, "there is a sense in which, what any being, in the sincerity of his heart, *thinks* he ought to do." (\*—1) Now we submit this depends upon whether the individual has informed himself as well as possible as to his duty. Of course, "Our rule is to follow our consciences steadily and faithfully, after we have taken care to inform them in the best manner we can." (\*—2) But do the two quotations agree? Here the author discusses rights of conscience in a very fair manner.

Practical virtue presupposes *freedom of the will or liberty*. Price disposes of this monumental problem quite summarily. "Virtue supposes determination, and determination supposes a determiner; and a determiner that determines not himself, is a palpable contradiction. Determination requires an efficient cause. If this cause is the being him-

self, I plead for no more; if not, then it is no longer *his* determination; that is, he is no longer the determiner, but the motive, or whatever else any one will maintain to be the cause of the determination." (\*—3) It has always been the *general* as well as the *natural* sense of mankind, that they cannot be accountable for what they have no power to avoid. The discussion is too brief to have its full weight, undoubtedly.

*Intelligence* is a second requisite of practical morality. Some degrees of knowledge of moral good and evil is necessary to moral agency.

Thirdly, *Consciousness of rectitude* is necessary to virtuous acts, and this consciousness must be the *rule* and *end*. Otherwise there would be no recognition of right actually in character. Indeed, perception of right and wrong, does *excite* to action, and is alone a sufficient principle of action. It is the supreme *motive*, but to how many relatively does it appeal? Surely only to a small proportion of human beings, because they cannot appreciate abstract motives. There must be some concrete motive. Price's arguments are mostly convincing to those of philosophic bent, yet there are many springs to action upon which he does not touch which appeal to the common mind more convincingly. Reference may be made to Martineau's table for example, p. 266, "Types of Ethical Theory," noting the careful analysis and close discrimination.

Price says, "The degree or regard, or disregard, of attachment to truth and rectitude, or want of attachment to the same, evinced by actions, is what determines the judgment we make of the degree of moral good and evil in them." (\*—4) External actions are considered as signs of motives and views of men. In general the latter can be inferred from the former with sufficient certainty, but when this is impracticable, the merit or demerit of actions cannot be safely judged. Doing a good act with little temptation to omit is of little virtue. When interests prompt to good deeds, they are virtuous just to the extent they are prompted by conscious influence of its rectitude, which is not generally to a high degree. When difficult

\*—1 Review of Morals P. 294

\*—2 Review of Morals P. 302

\*—3 Review of Morals P. 297

\*—4 Review of Morals P. 334

ties are surmounted, credit is due to the proportion effort has been used. Virtue is the greatest when all temptations are opposed, when a man is ready to follow wherever virtue leads, shrinking from every *appearance* of wrong, feeling such a horror at guilt as to dread all the *approaches* thereto.

Price states oppositely with respect to vice. All of which is of but small additional value. There has been little practical outcome from any scheme of a calculus of virtue or of vice. Generally they are more ingenious than useful.

Price further on recognizes the weakness in a system for estimating the amount of virtue in actions as follows: "It may be worth observing, how very deficient Hutcheson's manner of computing the morality of actions is. For this purpose he gives us this Canon, 'The virtue is as the moment of good produced, diminished or increased, by the private interest, concurring with or opposing it, divided by the ability.'

\* \* \* \* \* Some of the noblest acts of virtue, and worst acts of wickedness not being viewed as the means of any moment of good, or of misery, must according to the foregoing canon, be wholly indifferent."

Character does not even depend upon the amount of temptation overcome. Difficulties and inconveniences attending virtuous conduct are but the means of showing to others, who cannot see immediately into our hearts, what our moral temper is. On the other hand difficulties and temptations often cause very great evils and disadvantages for they may overwhelm and ruin the virtuous person, who may get no credit for the struggle. The moral culture of mankind implies just this warfare, however. Frequently, too, the difficulties met by a virtuous agent only save to display the *defects* of his character.

After some divergent observations of really quite interesting nature, Price goes on to state the *essentials of a good character*. Man should be reasonable and disposed to be governed by rectitude. The sources of vice are the inferior propensities and appetites. The reflective principle being found in different degrees, character is generally stronger as reflection more carefully examines, judges, directs, controls. Reason should yield to nothing else whatsoever but should model and superintend the whole

life. In the pre-eminence of reason is found the supremacy of the moral faculty and the possibility of the development of the noblest character. Price sums up: "If then we would know our own characters, and determine to which class of men we belong, the good or the bad, we must compare our regard to everlasting truth and righteousness with our regard to friends, credit, pleasure and life, our love of God and moral excellence with our love of inferior objects, the dominion of reason with the force of appetite, and find which prevail." \* \* \* \* \* It is the *ruling passion* that dominates the character. The ruling love of power, fame, and distinction, denominates a man *ambitious*; the ruling love of pleasure, *a man of pleasure*; of money, *a covetous man*. And, in like manner, the ruling love of God, of our fellow-creatures, and of rectitude and truth, denominates *a man virtuous*." (\*—1)

There remain a variety of observations in this chapter well suited to a homily. One criterion of a good character not to be overlooked is a constant endeavor to improve. True goodness must be a growing thing. All habits by time and exercise gain strength.

Price's ideas of the beauty and deformity of actions are extremely suggestive. Some actions are amiable; others are wrong not only, but perhaps odious, shocking, vile. These terms express effects in the observer not qualities in the action. These effects arise from the nature of things, owing to the constitution of the universe. An essential congruity exists between man's intellect and feelings on one side and moral activities on the other, so that it is impossible to behold a good action without love or respect arising toward the agent. Agreeable feelings of order, utility, peace of mind, or affection come in process of time to be associated with virtuous conduct. Those qualities in good actions which excite these agreeable feelings in the mind of the spectator form what some moralists have called the *beauty of virtue*.

Intuitions of right and beauty are distinct but mutually helpful, except in extreme cases, and should be made reciprocally supporting. "Do you imagine," says Socrates to Aristippus, "that

\*—1 Review Morals PP. 364-365

tions, an ethical element is immediately perceived; and the acts are pronounced right or wrong accordingly. The idea of right or wrong is never applied to the action of a brute animal, nor to an inanimate object of nature.

#### Accompaniments.

Two ideas accompanied by feelings grow out of the idea of the right: these are the notions of obligation and of merit and demerit. The idea of obligation grows immediately out of the idea of the right. As soon as an action is known to be right, the cognition springs up that it ought to be done; as soon as it is cognized that an action is wrong, then arises the idea that it should not be done. These ideas of the *ought* and the *ought not* are called the ideas of *obligation*.

Following the doing or not doing of an action comes the idea of merit or demerit. We condemn ourselves for the neglect or violation of moral duty; we censure others for doing wrong or failing to do right. The entire code of social order and government is based upon this idea.

#### Nature of the Right.

The right is not a mere idea; it is also a *reality*. An action is not right or wrong merely because men think it so; men think it right or wrong because it is so. The right and wrong are realities, essential attributes of voluntary actions. These realities are eternal and fixed in their nature; they cannot be changed or annihilated. The question in what the right consists, has been answered by different theories: (1) Highest Happiness; (2) Utility; (3) Legal Enactment; (4) Divine Law; (5) The Divine Nature; and (6) The Eternal Nature of Things.

The ethical theories may be classified more closely into—

1. Theories which depend upon a special view of the ideal end, or *summum bonum*.

a. Various forms of Hedonism which agree in maintaining that a pleasant feeling is the ultimate standard of moral value.

b. Doctrines of Perfection or Self-realization according to which the moral idea is a perfection of character (Hikok) or a complete and harmonious development of personal capabilities.

2. Theories which start from the way in which morality is apprehended or realized.

c. Intuitionism. 1. Asthetic. 2. Perceptual or Dogmatic—Price. 3. Rational—Kant.

d. Empiricism, which when not hedonistic, connects itself with some theory of evolution.

#### Hedonism.

Some philosophers hold that the ground of the right is in securing the highest happiness of the individual. Any action which contributes to the highest happiness of a person is right according to this theory, and it is right merely because it does thus contribute to his happiness. Anything which detracts from man's happiness is wrong, and it is so merely because it diminishes his enjoyment. Happiness, or the welfare of the individual, is the test of moral actions, and determines all the moral quality which they possess.

The great objection to Hedonism in its baldest form is that it makes virtue and happiness identical and thus contradicts the consciousness of mankind. Every person distinguishes between that which gives pleasure and that which is right, recognizing that many kinds of pleasure are clearly entirely wrong. Besides, men often do the right because it is right, even at the sacrifice of happiness.

While Hedonism became a fairly consistent view of life, it lacked depth. Its ideas of pleasure and desire, of happiness and health, of prudence and benevolence are all incomplete and fall below the plane of the noblest ethical truth. With much shifting of base, Hedonists have practically admitted that men do not actually regard the preference of morally right conduct as identical with the choice of the course which seems to bring the maximum of mere happiness. They admit that men do not regard themselves as obligated to seek happiness, nor make it a matter of conscience. The admission has also been made that in the practical reason of mankind, the ideal of happiness and the ideal of a human being doing duty faithfully are not identical ideas.

#### Standard for Intuitionism.

Right and wrong are ultimate or first principles. It is impossible to separate them from the nature of God—or

the world-ground, an ethical, personal spirit—for He is also eternal and immutable. Their source is in the nature of God as the ultimate reality, and the originator of the nature of things; hence, they are co-existent with God and the universe. Neither God nor the right can be conceived to change. Neither was created, and neither can be destroyed. Logically only is the nature of the right separate from the nature of God, and only thus can man sit in judgment upon his laws and predicate holiness of his nature and actions. In this way, there is a forceful meaning in "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" and "The Law of the Lord is perfect."

By intuitionism the ethical has been dignified, but in attempting to attain a universal rule of conduct self-contradiction and practical difficulty have resulted, leaving us with only a statement of relative values. Green admitted that ethical principles as such were only "formulative and influential." Shaw says, "Here consists the condemnation of Intuitionism. As a theory it leads nowhere, produces no fruit, accomplishes no result." Hobhouse says of intuitionism, "It is an easy theory, but fortunately it is not true, and if it were it would not explain anything."

#### Critique of the Moral Philosophy of Dr. Richard Price—Introduction to His Work.

Price thinks critics should enjoy liberty to pronounce their opinions "concerning the merit of books" and that the authors of said books should not be "at all disposed to be out of humor with critics nor the consequences of their criticisms." Critics should take more time to consider and examine than they generally do, otherwise they are correct only by chance and are guided by prejudice or pre-conceived opinions. Men are governed in forming these opinions by "their tempers, by interest, by humor, and passion, and a thousand nameless causes, which render it impossible for them not to err." There are in truth none who are possessors of that cool and dispassionate temper, that freedom from all wrong biases, that habit of attention and patience of thought, and, withal, that penetration and sagacity of mind, which are proper securities against error, and the

necessary qualifications in finding out truth. \*—1

Though seeking the modesty and diffidence recommended by Price we are still backward to approach the work of writing a critique and appreciation of the work entitled "A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals."

**Aim.** Price states his purpose as follows: "What I have had chiefly in view has been to fix the foundation of morals, or to trace virtue up to truth and the nature of things, and these to the Deity."

**His Life.** a. **Antecedents.** The father of Richard Price was a minister to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Bridgend, in Glamorganshire, Wales, and so deeply was the elder Price tinctured with austere Calvanistic principles, that the liberal and enlightened spirit which the famous son displayed mostly throughout life was developed according to the principles of opposites, though the latter occasionally gave way to the same spirit as the father as in his preaching of annihilation for the wicked. The father was a bigoted Calvanist, a person of morose temperament.

b. The generally most amiable philosopher, minister and author, who is to be briefly sketched herein, was born on February 23, 1723, at Tynton, in the parish of Llangeinor, County of Glamorganshire.

c. **Education.** The education of Richard Price was conducted partly by private tutors, and partly at private schools, where he devoted himself with ardour to the pursuit of knowledge and obtained great proficiency both in mathematics and theology. In the year 1769 he received the degree of D. D. from the University of Glasgow. Out of respect to the author's extraordinary merit as shown in the work on *Morals*, the University of Aberdeen, in 1769, presented him with the diploma of doctor of divinity. Also in 1783, the degree of L. L. D. was conferred upon him by Yale college in appreciation of his works on political liberty, and he was afterward elected a fellow of the American philosophical societies at Philadelphia and Boston.

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\*—1 P. 3 Rev. *Morals*.

The books which he read were select rather than numerous, yet he was familiar with the philosophy of the ancients, including Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Tully—and among the moderns, Cudworth, Balguy, Hume, Malebranche, Hutcheson, Warburton, Wollaston, Butler, Berkeley and Reid.

d. Vocation. Having accomplished his formal education at the academy in London, Price resided as Chaplain nearly thirteen years in the family of Mr. Streatchfield at Stoke-Newington. Subsequently he officiated in various dissenting congregations as minister with the duties of which office he was devoutly impressed. When discouraged by the apathy of his auditors, he gave up preaching altogether, and took to writing sermons for the press and superintended the publication of the works of Isaac Newton.

e. Works and their immediate effects. Richard Price moved to Newington Green in the year 1758, having married a Miss Sarah Blundell in the previous year. At this time he published his most famous philosophical treatise, "A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals," which introduced him to many persons of literary eminence, among whom were: Dr. Adams, of Pembroke College, Oxford; Dr. Douglass, the late Bishop of Salisbury; and to David Hume. In 1767 he published a volume of sermons, including his vigorous ideas relative to the future state, which attracted the attention and gained the acquaintance of Lord Shelburne, an event which had much influence in raising his reputation, and determining the character of his subsequent pursuits.

Price was destined to be known in his own times more as a writer on insurance, finance and political matters than merely as a minister or even as a philosopher. In 1769 he wrote some observations, addressed in a letter to Dr. Franklin on the expectation of lives, the increase of mankind, and the population of London, which were published in the Philosophical Transactions, with later observations upon the proper method of calculating the values of contingent reversions. These publications are said to have exercised a most beneficial influence in correcting inadequate calculations used in insurance and benefit societies.

Price's ardent love for civil and religious liberty led to political pamphlets, and in 1776 he published "Observations on Civil Liberty and the Justice and Policy of the War with America." This led to great discussion and in recognition of his services in the cause of liberty, Price was presented with the freedom of the City of London.

f. Friends and Associates. At this time he was the intimate friend of Franklin; he corresponded with Turgot; and in the winter of 1778, he was invited by Congress to come to America to assist in the financial administration of the new government. One of Price's most intimate friends was the celebrated Dr. Priestley, with whom he corresponded in discussion of the great questions of morals and metaphysics. In 1778 the views of these two liberal theologians on the subjects of materialism and necessity were published, wherein Price maintained, in opposition to Priestley, the free agency of man together with the unity and immortality of the human soul.

Price had distinguished abilities as a mathematical, moral and political writer. He had a neat and perspicuous style. His manner was natural, kindly and unaffected. His private character was not only irreproachable, but highly exemplary and amiable. He was an affectionate and generous brother, a loving and attentive husband. His talents and his labors were ever at the call of friendship. In the practice of all his virtues, he was utterly devoid of ostentation. His countenance was philanthropic and when lighted up in conversation it assumed an aspect peculiarly pleasing. His person was slender and rather below the common size, but was possessed of great muscular strength, as well as remarkable activity. A habit of deep thought had given a stoop to his figure in advanced life and he generally walked with his eyes fastened upon the ground, his coat buttoned, and one hand in his pocket, whilst the other swung by his side.

The education and experience of Price were such with his inherited disposition as naturally to give him a bent toward his philosophical and political beliefs. The influence of his times was marked. The cynicism of Hobbes, the satire of Mandeville, the skepticism of Hume and

the hedonism of Hutcheson, had contributed cumulatively to arouse Price. Added to this was the sensationalism of Locke aided by the sentimentalism of Butler and Smith. Just as Cudworth sought to refute Hobbes, so Price was led to rebuke Locke and Hutcheson. Locke's theory that all ideas originated in sensations aroused many reflective minds in England and on the Continent. Hutcheson tried to explain ideas of right and of the good by agreement in part with Locke yet providing a special moral sense. Price, some French, and some Scottish philosophers, on the other hand, denied Locke's theory and sought to prove the existence of another source of knowledge in the intuitive reason.

#### Origin of Right and Wrong.

Men discover right in the actions of their fellows. Price notes three different perceptions relating to these actions: (1) Perception of the right and wrong; (2) Our perception of beauty and deformity. (These perceptions are what he afterward means by intuition.) (3) Judgments of good or ill desert. \*—1 What power within us perceived and determined the idea of the right? He finally answers dogmatically the power of the understanding known as intuition.

Price immediately sets about discussing Dr. Hutcheson's views as to a moral sense and refuting them. He approves the *immediate* action of the moral sense, saying Hutcheson "has indeed well shown, that we have a faculty determining us immediately to approve or disapprove actions, abstracted from all views of private advantage; and that the highest pleasures of life depend upon this faculty." \*—2

Hereupon Price's approval ceases. He puts Hutcheson's meaning of the term moral sense as follows: "He considered it as the effect of a positive constitution of our minds, or as a relish given them for certain moral objects and forms and aversion to others, similar to the relishes and aversions given us for particular objects of the external and internal senses. If this author is right, our ideas of morality have the same original with our ideas of the sensible

qualities of bodies." (\*—3) "Our perception of right, of moral good, in actions is that agreeable emotion or feeling, which certain actions produce in us; and of wrong, or moral evil, the contrary." Hence virtue is by this view only a matter of taste and nothing within the actions, but a sensation of the mind.

For Price then here lies the fundamental question as to the foundation of morals. "For," he says, "granting that we have distinct perceptions of moral right or wrong they must denote either what the actions are, to which we apply them, or only our feelings, and agreeably to this, the power of perceiving them must be either that power whose object is truth, or some implanted power or sense." It must be recognized that actions alone are too narrow a basis for ethical theories, for there are good motives, wills and characters.

Price makes quick disposition of other theories. He says "the schemes which found morality on self-love, on positive laws or compacts, or on the Divine Will, must mean, that moral good and evil are only other words for advantageous and disadvantageous, willed and forbidden; or they relate not to the question, which is the nature and true account of virtue; but, what is the subject-matter of it." The former leads to tautology, the latter to the investigations of reason, the faculty which must find out what is conformable to will and that judges of the tendencies and effects of actions.

Locke claimed all our ideas came from sensation and reflection, now recognized an error. But, this view was quite prevalent in the Eighteenth century when psychology was undeveloped. Notwithstanding that sensation does immediately give many ideas, yet it does not follow that sensation is the source of all simple or original ideas. In opposition, Price says; "The power, I assert, that understands; or the faculty within us that discerns truth, and that compares all objects and ideas, and judges of them, is a spring of new ideas." Of this Ried says: "Dr. Price has observed very justly, that, if we take the words sensation and reflection as Mr. Locke has defined them in the beginning of his excellent essay, it will be impossible to

\*—1 Review of *Morals*. Judges P. 17-19.

\*—2 P. 10

\*—3 P. 9.

derive some of the most important of our ideas from them." \*—1

Price refers to the classification of the faculties of the mind. He distinguishes not only between sensation and understanding, but the latter from imagination. He objects to putting all faculties under understanding and will, and yet neglects the latter, as well as the emotions. The two acts of understanding for him(\*—2) are intuition and deduction. Elsewhere he speaks of judging as under intuition but seems to know nothing of induction. The *original sources* of our ideas as considered at present day are: (1) Perception, giving sensations and precepts; (2) Conception, giving concepts or general ideas, which Price recognizes indefinitely (\*—3); (3) Abstraction giving abstract ideas. (4) Intuition giving intuits. The last three are phases of the understanding according to Price but not clearly differentiated (\*—4) He calls their products simple, original, and uncompounded perceptions of the mind which in many is untrue.

Price returns to discuss a moral sense from time to time and his work has been said to be professedly directed against the doctrines of Hutcheson in particular, yet the treatment as a whole is constructive rather than polemical. In regard to moral sense, he says: (1) What judges, as the moral faculty does, concerning the perceptions of the senses cannot itself be a sense; (2) One sense cannot judge another. "Sense consists in the obtruding of certain impressions upon us, independently of our wills; but it cannot perceive what they are, or whence they are derived." "The understanding takes cognizance of its object within itself, and by its own native power masters and comprehends." "Sense presents particular forms to the mind; but cannot rise to any general ideas. It is the intellect that examines and compares the presented forms, that rises above individuals, to universal and abstract ideas; and thus looks downward upon objects, takes in at one view an infinity of particulars, and is capable of discovering general truths. Sense sees only the outside of things, reason

acquaints itself with their natures."(\*—5) This seems to be quite a good statement of abstraction, generalization, and induction for that day, though the terms are used freely and not strictly in the latter day senses.

"It is the intellect that must perceive order and proportion variety and regularity, design, connection, art and power; aptitudes, dependencies, correspondencies, and adjustment of parts, so as to subserve an end, and compose one perfect whole." (\*—6) Here he follows Cudworth and Plato.

Price then traces the action of the understanding as an intuitive power quite satisfactory for his day in developing ideas of solidity, inertia, substance, duration, space, power and causation. He fails here to develop the intuitive idea of truth as co-ordinate with the right and so has much resulting confusion afterward. Some statements seem to imply that truth is generic including the other intuitions. Here later intuitive writers seem to do better—the true, the beautiful, and the good are separate institutions. Price's statement is as follows: "After the mind has been furnished with ideas of various objects and existence, they become themselves further objects to the intellectual faculty; from which arises a new set of ideas, which are perceptions of this faculty, and the objects of which are, not the mind's own affections, but necessary truth. (\*—7) Here he founds the common sense philosophy. "Were the question whether our ideas of number, causation, &c., represent the truth and reality perceived by the understanding, or particular impressions made by the object;—were this, I say, the question; would it not be sufficient to appeal to common sense and leave it to be determined by every person's private consciousness ? (\*—8)

"No unmixed act of understanding, merely as such, and without the agency of some intermediate emotion, can affect the will. The account given by Price of perceptions and judgments respecting moral subjects, does not advance one step towards the explanation

\*—5 P. 20

\*—6 P. 21

\*—7 PP. 53-54

\*—8 Jas. Mackintosh, *Miscellaneous Works.* P. 146

\*—1 Reid's Works, Vol. 1, P. 347.

\*—2 P. 18 N.

\*—3 P. 20.

\*—4 P. 37

of the authority of conscience over the Will, which is the matter to be explained." Price, however, felt the difficulty, so much as to allow, "that in contemplating the acts of moral agents, we have both a perception of the understanding and a feeling of the heart." He even admits that it would have been highly prenicious to us, if our reason has been left without such support. But, he has not shown how on such a supposition, we could have acted on a mere opinion, nor has he given any proof that what he calls "support" is not, in truth, the whole of what produces the conformity of voluntary acts to morality. The following sentence from Price illustrates his and all theories on mere intellectual principles: "Reason alone did we possess it in a higher degree, would answer all the ends of the passions. Thus there were no need of parental affection, were all parents sufficiently acquainted with the reasons for taking upon them the guidance and support of those whom nature has placed under their care, and were they virtuous enough to be always determined by those reasons."(\*-1) A very slight consideration shows that, without these last words, the preceding part would be utterly false, and with them it is utterly insignificant.

#### Summary of "Good and Ill Desert."

Ideas of good or ill desert necessarily arise in us upon considering certain actions and characters. Virtue is worthy and vice is unworthy. These ideas are a species of the ideas of right and wrong with the following difference: Right and wrong are, with strict propriety, applied to actions but good and ill desert belong rather to the agents. The agent alone is capable of happiness or misery; and he alone properly can be said to deserve these. There is a propriety in making those happy who practice virtue and in discountenancing the vicious and corrupt. "When we say, a man deserves well, we mean that his character is such that we approve of showing him favor; or that it is right he should be happier than if he had been of a different character. We cannot but love the virtuous agent, and desire his happiness above that of others.

\*-1 Review P. 121

Reason determines at once, that he ought to be the better for his virtue." The opposite is true of a vicious being.

Different characters require different treatment, but not merely on account of their relative happiness, or other consequences. Such discrimination in treatment is immediately and ultimately right. Vice is of essential demerit and virtue is in itself rewardable. These are instances of absolute and eternal rectitude, and are by no means, wholly coincident with or resolvable into views of public utility and inutility.

Price founds a system of rewards and punishments here especially with reference to Divine government. The good are to hope for eternal reward and the wicked for everlasting punishment. God has given us natures in accordance with His own. Since our perception of good desert is a necessary perception of our reason, it demonstrates to us what the supreme reason will do, what laws and rules it observes in carrying on the happiness of the universe. It is the intention that gives virtue objective merit. When the motive is good there is so far virtue, whatever the issue in action. The highest motive is to do right because it is right.

This summary deserves observations. How can the right be a simple idea if all this is true? If good and ill desert "are plainly a species of the ideas of right and wrong; (\*-2) then it is preferable to call the ethical idea complex. The intuition of the good embraces three conceptions—the right and wrong, the obligation to do the right and not to do the wrong, and the merit or demerit of the doer of the actions. In this respect, the idea of the right differs from that of beauty, space, time or any other of the rational ideas. The definition of Bowne has been admired: "Merit is the desert of moral approval and the right to be treated accordingly; while demerit is the desert of moral disapproval and its appropriate treatment."(\*-3) Ladd suggests that "this definition must be interpreted as involving three factors: (1) A feeling of obligation to approve (I ought to be morally approbated); (2) A feeling of right to assert a claim (I am enti-

\*-2 Review Morals. P. 128

\*-3 Principles of Ethics P. 171

tled to some form of the good, which ought to come to me); (3) A vague feeling of another's duty as it were (for another than I ought to treat me "accordingly"—by bringing me some reward).

All this suggests that the complexity of the conception of merit is one of much difficulty and beyond the analytic power of the days of Price. Butler had said: "Our sense of discernment of actions as morally good or evil implies in it a sense or discernment of them as of good or ill desert." (\*-1) On the opposite view the tendency of both Calvinistic theologians and many rationalistic moralists is to refuse to admit that merit can belong to human actions. A man can never do more than his duty. Such was the position of the Stoics and Kant. In later times "merit" has not always been distinguished from "worth" and the tendency has been to build up a system of values in ethics, with many new problems. Meining and Ehrenfelds have been leaders here; the latter claiming that the process of valuation is identical with desire, and the former that the sense of value given in feelings of worth follow upon processes of the judgment. Ever since the days of Protagoras relative values have been recognized. The question, "What is life worth?" is ultimate, leading to the alternative of Optimism or Pessimism.

#### The Origin of Our Desires and Affections.

The development of human feelings seems somewhat crude and indefinite in the mind of Price, though he has some original and valuable ideas. One would generally rather call benevolence a virtue than an affection. He seems to apprehend an affection clearly so far as its object is "desired for its own sake." We understand affections to be benevolent or malevolent. Under the former are included such forms as love of kindred, love of friends, gratitude, patriotism, philanthropy, and piety. Price makes a mistake when he puts ambition here rather than among the egotistic emotions. Probably a very close classification of feelings ought not to be expected in the time of Price, particularly when the sensibilities are so inadequate-

ly treated by psychologists even at the present time.

Price says, "The desire of happiness for ourselves certainly arises not from instinct." (\*-2) Here we must differ from him, for we find that the later intuitionists state just oppositely: "The desire of happiness is instinctive and universal." (\*-3) It is not entirely selfish, since it may be accompanied with a generous desire for the happiness of others. Nor is this desire the only instinctive one, at least in its beginnings, for such also are desire of society, desire of power, desire of esteem, and desire of knowledge. Price himself says: "All the inferior orders of creatures, and men themselves during their first years have no other guide than instinct." (\*-4) Doubtless he is right in what follows: "The further men advance in existence, and the wiser they grow, the more they are disengaged from it." (\*-5).

We cannot but think Price in the wrong in this chapter in that he places all affection toward others under the term benevolence. It would seem that the quotation in Chapter VII from Butler's Analogy as well as Price's own remarks there fully justify this criticism. Benevolence is neither the whole of virtue nor is it the whole of virtue toward society. Philosophy, art and religion have taught man that there is more in benevolence than mere feeling on the one side, while there is more in such virtues as justice, and truthness than can be subsumed under the term benevolence. As Ladd has wisely said, "The idea of rational measure is required as an added ethical qualification in connection with benevolence itself." (\*-6) Much more is this true among mere feelings than the more developed virtues. There is no unity among the virtues even, excepting as it is organized within each individual self-hood.

And yet some of the feelings have a rational basis as Price claims. Among the rational emotions have been justly placed the egoistic, the aesthetic, and the ethical. We would include under

\*-2 Review Morals P. 112.

\*-3 Brooks, Mental Science P. 452

\*-4 Review Morals P. 125. Also \*-5.

\*-6—Ladd, Philosophy of Conduct P. 359.

the egoistic such as pride and humility; under the aesthetic, novelty, beauty, the sublime and the ludicrous; under the ethical, feelings of obligation, satisfaction, and remorse. All of these are awakened by a rational cognition. They arise from ideas of intuition, or the reason.

Price's distinction between *affection* and *passion* seems somewhat inadequate. He says that when affections are "aided and strengthened by instinctive determinations," they are called *passions*. More generally animal desires are called *passions*, but all desires and emotions become *passions* when they are "strong and uncontrolled dispositions; so strong as to exclude or overpower other mental tendencies, and to give rise on occasion to uncontrolled emotions." (\*—1)

Chapter seven in Price's Review of *Morals* treats of "The Subject-matter of *Virtue*, or its Principal Heads and Divisions." This is a crude attempt to classify the *virtues*. He follows the well-established custom of putting all under Duties to God, to our fellow men and to ourselves. Here he shows the futility of endeavoring to put all virtue under benevolence or the study of the public good, still maintaining that term in too wide a significance, however. Under duty to God, we do not find him discussing systematically, such specific duties as reverence, obedience, worship—including prayer, praise, and the keeping of the Sabbath—though he refers to devotion, piety, blasphemy, and love to God.

Under duty to our fellow-men, we do not find him discussing liberty, reputation, the family, nor the state, though he touches upon *beneficence* as all-inclusive. In this particular he discusses gratitude, veracity, the sacredness of promises, and justice, which has an economic significance, relating particularly to property.

Under duties to self, he first endeavors to show that these have as real an existence as others and are equally as binding, but he does not go into the discussion of self-support, self-defence, self-control, nor self-culture, excepting that in regard to the latter, he says we should act "up to the dignity and hopes of immortal beings, and the uniform and

steadfast pursuit of our own true perfection in opposition to whatever difficulties may come our way. This is high and true virtue." (\*—2)

However, in this chapter, he makes some sensible remarks upon question of casuistry. He also opens the door to the differences of opinion which have arisen among intuitionists, whether the rightness or wrongness is evident with reference to classes or kinds of actions or motives—giving general principles or rules—or whether only the moral character of particular actions is intuitively perceived. Price says, "However different from one another the heads which have been enumerated are, yet, from the very notion of them, as *heads of virtue*, it is plain, that they all run up to one general idea, and should be considered as only different modifications and views of one original, all-governing law. It is the same authority that enjoins, the same truth and right that obliges, the same eternal reason that commands in them all. Virtue thus considered, is necessarily one thing \* \* \* \* True and genuine virtue must be uniform and universal." (\*—3)

While this chapter makes no claim to be an exposition of practical morality in detail, yet he discusses the "demonstration of morality," or its application to particular cases in an illuminating manner. Many moral principles or maxims are self-evident, yet the putting of many special cases under general principles is not so plain. Here he disposes of the "particular intuitionists" summarily, and takes the ground, "Before we can be capable of deducing demonstrably, accurately, and particularly, the whole rule of *right* in every instance, we must possess universal and unerring knowledge. It must be above the power of any finite understanding to do this." (\*—4)

Here also he disposes of the theories that *education* and *habit* can be the foundation of morals; for they give us no new ideas.

At the end of the chapter, he discusses one of the famous objections to intuitions, viz., "the diversity of men's sentiments concerning moral matters."

\*—2 Review *Morals* PP. 249-250

\*—3 Review *Morals* PP. 274-275

\*—4 *Ibid* PP. 282-283

what is good is not beautiful? Virtue in the same respect which we call it good is ever acknowledged to be beautiful also." Armstrong says, "Virtue is the strength and beauty of the soul." And Prior, "When with beauty we can virtue join, we paint the semblance of a form divine."

*The Relation of Morals to Natural Religion* is interestingly and instructively treated by Price. Some of his conclusions are more charmingly than convincingly stated, however, yet they have on the whole a very suggestive outcome. When he goes from human reason to divine reason as the origin of the former, arguing that the nature of things is but a reflex of the Divine nature, he argues thinkingly and pleasingly. When he discusses the motives of God, however, according to our human standard, we have to halt. He says, "Upon the principles defended in this treatise, nothing can be more easy to be ascertained than the moral perfections of the Deity." (\*—1) Now, reasoning by analogy has peculiar dangers. Again, "As it is evident that the seat of *infinite power*, must be the seat of *infinite knowledge*, so it appears from hence no less evident, that it must also be the seat of *absolute rectitude*; and these qualities, thus implying one another and *essentially one*, complete the idea of the Deity, and exhibit Him to us in a most awful and glorious light." We are inclined to believe all this is true, but we would submit the query. Is it so *evident* as Price affirms?

Our author then goes on to delineate the Divine administration of the whole world in his moral government and to discuss the state of future rewards and punishment, raising a variety of perplexing questions which it does not pertain to us to discuss. These questions in this connection are suggestive. Did Price recognize the insufficiency of morals without the support of religion? Did he recognize that just as the unity of virtue is attained only in some spiritual, ethical being, so it is only by the unification of truth, beauty and goodness in the *world ground*—an ethical, personal spirit—that the mind finds satisfaction? We are inclined to think that he did not see this from the philo-

sophical side but from the theological point of view; and, is not the philosopher driven to practically the position of the theologians, only stated differently?

### Conclusion.

1. **Criticisms.**—It is really a task to say aught by way of difference of opinion with so amiable a philosopher; so earnest and successful a minister; so thorough-going and widely-read a student; and so natural, kindly and unaffected a man as Richard Price. Martineau says somewhere that Price had just the right personality to be an intuitionist, and we think a perusal of his life has entirely satisfied us that this is true. Fichte has also said: "The kind of philosophy which one chooses depends upon the kind of man one is. For a philosophical system is not a dead bit of furniture which one can take to one's self or dispose of, as one pleases; but it is endowed with a soul by the soul of the man who has it." Perchance his kindness is sometimes all too destructive of severity in his logic, at any rate the popularity he had both as a minister and a philosopher waned as time went on. He seems to have exceeded others of his day as a compiler and classifier but added little which was original or profound. He was aesthetic, delicate in sentiment, but not always clear nor exhaustive. Necessarily it would be tiresome and savor of quibbling to catalogue the lesser faults.

The great defect of this school of ethics is due to the unanalyzed condition in which they have left the voluntary element in action. Intellect and sensibility are analyzed and discriminated but not *will*. They contemplate the voluntary element as an integral fact, in which as a single thing, a certain quality of right or wrong is perceived. As there is not always agreement in assigning the epithets used, and the applications of them admit of being justified by argument, their allotment was naturally attributed to reason. So long as the quality of rightness was left somewhat indeterminate this account seemed to pass without challenge. But as soon as the rightness was insisted upon as an absolutely simple quality, intuitively apprehended by

\*—1 Review Morals P. 407

Reason, it became impossible to understand how its presence in a given act could be affirmed by one person and denied by another; and how, without any complex contents admitting of comparison, it could ever be reasoned out between two opponents. The rational faculty has got the credit of it on precisely the ground that it was now taken from it, viz., that it could be the subject of argument among persons seeking the truth about it but not yet agreed; that was exactly the process of which the intuitive reason did not admit. The difficulty which thus arises, of reconciling discrepancies of ethical judgment with intuitive certainty, no writer of the school has been able to overcome. It can never vanish until separate attention is fixed upon the springs of action in the mind and the operation of actions when put forth; of the former the relative quality is known by intuitions; of the latter by calculation. The total character of the action is composed of both, its rectitude depending upon the first, its wisdom upon the second; in the one aspect it is amenable to conscience; in the other, to reason; neither of which can perform the function of the other. (\*—1)

#### Intuitionism.

This theory contradicts the law of parsimony and being unnecessary is therefore unphilosophical. By many, intuitional theory is held to contradict consciousness. The right is not generally assumed as the category of reality. As we have seen, ethical emotions are not to be accounted for. By many, it is held that so called intuitional judgments are only those rapidly formed as results of instincts, heredity and education. Much criticism of intuitional theory has pertained to the good "as a simple idea."

Jouffroy insists at greath length that moral good is necessarily a choice of natural good; and that consequently moral good cannot be simple, but must be a complex idea and consequently definable. (\*—2) Action cannot be judged excepting in relation to its end; this

end must be perceived before it is judged, and only from the nature of the end can the nature of the action be determined. An act will be good, if it has a worthy end. Besides a goodness of actions there is a goodness of ends. In determining that there are good ends, a definition of good-in-itself is determined. Moral quality is therefore defined as conformability of actions, motives and attitudes to ultimate ends.

The intuitional theory is impracticable in practice because it leads to inconsistency. Truth, justice, temperance and courtesy are respectively right but the rightness common cannot be explained. All is arbitrary, for right is right. In cases of conflict, no reason for preference of one virtue over another can be assigned. Again, all men are equally capable of appreciating the morality of actions, and consequently equally enlightened in moral judgment. There can be no difference between the learned and the ignorant, none between men of different ages, moral science, cannot be developed, therefore with the progress of civilization and savages must be equally well informed with the civilized. Morality of one action cannot be deduced from another; ethics cannot be reduced to a system nor taught; and finally there can really be no ethical science other than a mere catalogue of right actions recognized by intuition.

Conflict is also aroused between duty and well-being. Desire for happiness is a good impulse in its sphere and is a root of worthy individual and social virtues. To fail to recognize it is unphilosophical, to flout it tempts to affectation in theory and hyocrisy in practice. Ethical theory should adjust strife between motives.

Richard Watson criticises Cudworth, Butler and Price because they maintain that virtue carries its own obligation in itself; "that the understanding at once perceives a certain action to be right and therefore it ought to be performed." Objections to this are: (\*—3) (1) It supposes the understandings of men to determine whether precisely in the same manner concerning all virtuous and vicious actions, which is contrary to fact.

\*—1 Summarized Argument from Martineau—Types of Ethical Theory, P. 484.

\*—2 Introduction to Ethics— Vol. II, P. 327.

\*—3 P. 68, R. Watson's "Theological Institutes."

(2) It supposes a previous rule, by which the action is determined to be right; but if the revealed Will of God is not to be taken into consideration, what common rule exists among men? There is evidently no such rule, and therefore no means of certainly determining what is right.

(3) If a common standard were known among men, and if the understandings of men determined in the same manner as to the conformity or otherwise, of an action to that standard; what renders it a matter of *obligation* that any one should perform it? The rule must be proved to be binding, or no ground of obligation is established.

Of course the *evolutionist* would criticise the *intuitionist* school from a different point of view, somewhat as follows: Whatever certain personal characteristics become fixed, it is well known that they frequently pass from parent to child; so that much of the character which has been won by self-discipline is transmitted by inheritance, and the son starts from a station in advance of his father. Hence, as Spencer says, "From this cause, it is suggested, the inward experience of past generations may establish a cerebral register of themselves, ever deepening in its trace and quickening in its velocity of movement; and this swift compound of what were once long processes of thought or feeling turns up in us as *Intuition* and, assuming the airs of a heaven-sent conscience, tempts us to overlook and despise the homely utilities which alone it represents." This is Mr. Spencer's celebrated doctrine that "Experience of utility, organized and consolidated during all past generations of the human race, has been producing nervous modifications, which, by continual transmission and accumulation become in us certain faculties of moral intuition, certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experience of utility."—(\*1).

II. Appreciation. Dr. Price's work has been very highly approved. Marti-

neau characterizes his morals as the "completest expository work" of his school. "It is not a fragment like Cudworth's treatise; it is not a subsidiary chapter of *Natural Theology*, like Clarke's; it presents an integral theory, standing on its own independent territory and carefully guarded from threatening border warfare all around." (\*—2)

"Price cannot, after such predecessors, materially strengthen the foundations of the theory; and when we proceed to test them we find ourselves measuring a familiar corner stone, only beginning from a different angle. His chief originality and freshness are brought out by the fact that he is writing for a new generation, in which the writings of Shaftesbury and of Hutcheson had touched some springs of disinterested feeling, and awakened some conceptions of beauty in character, of which the schools had taken little or no account." (\*—3)

"Price advanced no positive doctrine and no body of argument which is not already found in Cudworth or Clarke." "It is more easy to share Price's confidence in his conclusion than to accept it on the security of his reasoning." (\*—4)

J. D. Morrell says, "Almost the only writer of the rationalistic school whose works are likely to form a part of our standard philosophy, is Price. So extensive did he make the peculiar province of reason in the whole economy of man, that he considered it possible, not only for all our moral feelings, but for all our emotions of every kind to be traced to this source. In his controversy with Priestley particularly, he showed how strongly he viewed the philosophical aberration of the age, and how earnestly he desired to place moral and metaphysical truth upon its deeper and truer foundation." (\*—5)

Jouffroy preferred "The moral system of Price over that of the Scottish School on account of its intrinsic excellence and because in extent and clearness of style it is superior to either

\*—2 Types of Ethical Theory P. 475,  
Jas. Martineau, et seq.

\*—3 Ibid—Condensed

\*—4 Ibid—Martineau

\*—5 Morrell—Modern Philosophy, PP.  
143-144

\*—1 From Spencer's letter to Mill and appreciation in Bain's *Mental and Moral Science*, P. 721.

Reid or Stewart." (\*-1) "Price proceeds like a master. With clear and penetrating view, he grasps at once the essential difficulty, and comes directly to the question." (\*-2) Price's "demonstration is as complete as it is simple." (\*-3) As to Price's proof of the rational origin of moral ideas, Jouffroy continues, "This demonstration is not only beautiful, it is invulnerable."

III. Present Status and Outlook. Perhaps through neglect, but nevertheless the influence of Price has certainly diminished and his abilities have not secured for him the prominent place hoped for by many of his friends and fellow-intuitionists. The theories he advanced have been further developed and much beyond his hopes, though in somewhat different direction. Much similarity exists between the work of Kant and Price and yet no connection can be established directly, no positive evidence being at hand that Kant read Price.

Fowler says, "Price's views are mainly interesting in the History of Morals, on account of their resemblance to the subsequent theories of Kant." Among these points are the exaltation of reason; the depreciation of the affections; unwillingness to regard the partial and accidental constitution of man as the basis of morality; the ultimate and irresolvable character of the idea of rectitude; the notion that the reason imposes this idea as a law upon the will, becoming thus an independent spring of action; the insistence upon the reality of liberty or 'the power of acting or determining'; the importance attached to the reason as a distinct source of ideas; and the discrimination of the moral from the speculative understanding." (\*-4).

Comparing the sketch of intuition and idealism which we have previously given with the work of Price, great advancement in definitions and clearness as well as systematizing of ideas, is evident. All this has been further advanced by such writers as Martineau and Green. In the conflict between intuitionism and hedonism both have been modified. Facts have been observed in the ethical expe-

rience which contradict intuitionism: (1) The common ideal is only a "rough and ready affair." (2) A process of change is going on in the social ideal. The answer is "The right is by nature both subjective and individual on the one hand; and, on the other hand, it is objective and universal." (\*-5)

Ironically intuitionism had to meet the results of its own arguments against Hobbes as to disinterested impulses in man. Utility asserted that such impulses are sufficient test of the morality of actions and no intuitive faculty is needed. This discussion was intensified by the baldness with which Price held that rightness and wrongness are unanalyzable qualities of acts themselves. On one side this seemed to reduce moral science to mere dogmatism, and on the other, it came into conflict with the ruling psychological theory which was analyzing all ideas into complexes of sense qualities, and associated experiences. So intuitionism assumed the form which it still retains—the assertion that moral distinctions flow from, and are reached by an inspection of acts themselves, and not from a consideration of results. Price did well in systematizing and clearly stating this theory, as well as arousing discussion, though he has been strikingly surpassed by the greatness and profoundity of Kant, as well as the brilliancy of Martineau.

Former intuitionism largely neglected social ethics. It realized personality, but neglected its environment of other personalities, and the consequent development controlled by them. In the past, ethics has felt too self-sufficient. Ethics has now returned to the truth which Plato saw but did not clearly state: "No simple category will adequately express the nature of our highest ideals of the good." (\*-6) Utility of truth will clear up the ideals. "The moral nature of man must blend its voice in harmony with his artistic and religious nature. Ethics must clasp hands with Aesthetics and with the Philosophy of Religion. Such a threefold cord, which binds humanity to the ideal, cannot be easily or quickly severed." (\*-7)

\*-1 P. 252; \*-2 P. 255; \*-3 P. 256,  
Jouffroy's Introduction to Ethics,  
Vol. II.

\*-4 Principles of Morals by Fowler and  
Williams. *Wilson*

\*-5 Ladd—Philosophy of Conduct P. 520

\*-6 Taylor—The Problem of Conduct,  
P. 241.

\*-7 Ladd—Philosophy of Conduct, P. 650

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